**UNITED NATIONS** **S**

**Security Council**

Distr.
GENERAL

S/1994/34
15 January 1994

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

LETTER DATED 14 JANUARY 1994 FROM THE CHARGE D'AFFAIRES A.I.
OF THE PERMANENT MISSION OF ERITREA TO THE UNITED NATIONS
ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have been instructed by my Government to transmit the attached letter dated 3 January 1994 from H.E. Mr. Isaias Afwerki, President of the State of Eritrea, addressed to Your Excellency, which I received today.

I should be grateful if you would have the enclosed letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Ghirmai GHEBREMARIAM
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

Annex

Letter dated 3 January 1994 from the President of Eritrea addressed to the President of the Security Council

I wish to bring Your Excellency's attention a grave incident that occurred along our borders with the Sudan and that may, if left unchecked, plunge the region into another bout of war and conflict. This is not, it must be noted, an isolated incident. Rather, it marks an escalation in the spiral of wilful acts of subversion and provocation that the Sudanese National Islamic Front and its Government have been perpetrating in the past. Allow me to describe briefly the circumstances surrounding the recent dangerous development.

On 16 December 1993, a group of 20 armed "jihad" agents crossed the border from the Sudan, entered our territory illegally and clashed with our border patrol units at Ad Hako, about 20 kilometres inside the country. In the skirmishes that followed, all the "jihad" infiltrators were killed. The Eritrean Armed Forces lost a platoon commander with the rank of lieutenant.

Subsequently, it was established that there were two North Africans among the killed "jihad" groups.

While such irresponsible acts of sabotage across our frontiers with the Sudan are not new, the presence of non-Eritreans on a subversive mission is a new development. In a sense, this is not surprising since the so-called jihad movement is the creation of the Sudanese National Islamic Front; a fact that is not denied by the National Islamic Front itself.

The Government of Eritrea has been fully aware of these facts. But, in spite of the provocative acts of border incursions and subversion in the past several years, it chose to mitigate and resolve the crisis through patience and by fostering a constructive dialogue with the National Islamic Front and its Government. The Government of Eritrea opted for this path because it believes that the bonds of mutual interest and respect that link both peoples together are profound and transcend these temporary problems.

But, the National Islamic Front and its Government have persisted in their deceitful game of mixed signals and false promises. They have refused to heed our calls for reason. In the meantime, they have been working frantically to weaken and overthrow the Government of Eritrea as well as to expand their influence in the Horn and destabilize the whole region.

One of the weak points that the National Islamic Front is exploiting to promote its objectives is the Eritrean refugee community in the Sudan. These refugees, who have been dislocated from their homeland in the course of the past three decades of war, generally live in abysmal poverty. They are further enduring moral and psychological stress as third-class citizens. The National Islamic Front is viciously exploiting their desperate status, literally using them as hostages, and forcibly conscripting them into its "people's militias" to serve its strategy.

Partial responsibility for this deplorable state of affairs must surely rest on the international community. Indeed, the failure of the international community to defend their rights, the lack of tangible response to the repeated appeals that the Government has made on their behalf as well as its incapacity to make progress on the bilateral arrangements that it sought to forge with Khartoum have all combined to aggravate their vulnerability to and victimization by National Islamic Front strategy.

The National Islamic Front has otherwise blindly set out on a perilous road of regional expansion and destabilization using religion as a convenient tool. It has already devised extensive programmes to advance this dream.

The Eritrean people have paid more than their share of precious sacrifices in the imposed war that raged for three decades. To exact further sacrifices from them at this juncture cannot be defensible by any standards; nor can they endure such a burden. The curtailment of acts of subversion that are aimed at disturbing the peace that they have won at so much cost must surely be a responsibility that the international community shares jointly with them. In this spirit, the Government of Eritrea appeals to Your Excellency to denounce and take appropriate measures against the National Islamic Front for its acts of subversion and interference in the affairs of a sovereign State in contravention of accepted norms of international behaviour. We also appeal to Your Excellency's Government to take necessary measures to defend the rights of the refugees in the country of exile and assist them in their quest to return to their homeland. Needless to say, the Government of Eritrea will not bear any consequences that may result from the illegal and unconstructive policy that the National Islamic Front has set in motion.

(Signed) Isaias AFWERKI
President

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